

Science and Morality

*"I traveled to Aleppo and Damascus,
Sought knowledge far and wide,
Yet found it all to be nothing,
Except for good manners, only good manners."*

*"I entered the council of scholars,
Sought knowledge with utmost desire,
But they said, 'Knowledge is secondary,
First comes good manners, first comes good manners.'"*
– Yunus Emre

When it comes to science and morality, I believe it is essential to start with the words of those who embody these qualities, to pay homage to knowledge and receive a blessing from morality.

To say, "I studied and became knowledgeable," as Yunus suggests, is mere toil without substance. Our Lord, whose first command is "Read," also informs us that He teaches knowledge by the pen. In other words, the Qur'an lays out our path: Read, and learn with the pen. It conveys that, while our creation may not carry extraordinary qualities, we can reach perfection through knowledge. This same pen writes our fate, and it records our deeds, good and bad, throughout our lives. So, attention to the pen is crucial.

The difference between humans and animals lies in this very detail. For humans, reaching perfection through knowledge comes with an inherent message: although born without knowledge, humans must acquire it to live meaningfully. In contrast, animals, considered lower beings, stand and walk within minutes of birth, immediately knowing how to survive by finding their mother's milk. Did they study? Were they trained? No. They come into life with the necessary equipment for survival, and it suffices until the end of their lives. So why does humanity come with zero knowledge yet ascend to such heights?

The secret lies in the divine message of the Qur'an, which serves as God's message to all His prophets, to humanity, and to jinn. It is our road map, our life's creed. As Bediuzzaman said, it is a mentor to humanity, a source of all sciences, a beacon of enlightenment, and a library filled with guidance. It is God speaking to us, a wellspring of prayer, remembrance, and reflection. This message inspires all creatures with knowledge, from angels to humans, and even to animals.

Thus, the foundation of human maturity is knowledge, and its ultimate goal is morality perfected by faith—in other words, proper conduct.

If a person does not clothe themselves in the armor of proper conduct, they will fall from the high purpose of creation to the lowest depths of disgrace without even realizing it. Neglecting the balanced path of life's philosophy, they drift between extremes, lost in indulgences without learning the purpose of their creation, spiraling in states of ruin.

The path is clear. One who seeks knowledge is called a student, and one on the path of knowledge is a seeker.

But is this the only path to walk? Certainly not. A person who comes to this world for commerce or employment will surely earn their livelihood without exaggeration, yet must not step outside the boundaries of proper conduct and faith. They must avoid the forbidden.

According to Mevlana, to possess true knowledge and wisdom, one must refrain from unlawful earnings:

*"Eat only what is lawful to attain knowledge:
For knowledge and wisdom are born from lawful sustenance,
Love and grace arise from lawful sustenance,
If bites are seeds, thoughts are their fruits,
If bites are an ocean, thoughts are its pearls."*

The essence of the soul expands with knowledge and reaches universality.

One should avoid what has been prohibited as a test. They should know their limits and not exceed them, and this awareness will come from understanding knowledge and self. They should grasp the Qur'an's message and follow the counsel of the Prophet. Otherwise, those who burden themselves with worldly troubles will find this world a burden in return.

The knowledge of true companions elevates them,
But worldly people bear it as a weight,
When knowledge speaks to the soul, it becomes a friend,
When it caters to material desires, it becomes a burden.

One must avoid tainting the universal mind with greed and ego.

A person's knowledge is like a drop from the sea:

*"O God, You gave me a drop of knowledge from Your boundless ocean,
Allow it to reunite with Your seas,
There is a drop of knowledge in my soul,
Shield it from the soil and the winds of the body."*

The values people hold are largely defined by their thought patterns, which are formed by acquired knowledge. A person's character is built on three foundations: problem-solving style, communication manner, and way of thinking. These thought patterns are like software written in the mind.

The light of faith combined with knowledge from the Qur'an shapes one's thought patterns, molding the raw material of morality into a refined product of proper conduct.

In society, a person's thought patterns, when respected, reflect values that have gained public approval. The more people accept these virtues, the stronger the collective memory becomes.

The virtues prioritized by a community define its character. A nation either thrives by upholding its values or fades into history.

So let us strive to rekindle those noble days of our ancestors, enlightened by faith and morality, by embracing knowledge, refining ourselves with ethics, and donning the armor of proper conduct.

It is said that in the West, civilization is based on lineage, while in the East, it is founded on propriety.

Ahmet TRKAN